

REMARKS

In view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks, reconsideration of this application and early allowance of the application is respectfully requested.

Before turning to the substantive aspects of the Office Action, Applicants would like to take this opportunity to request that the Examiner acknowledge the claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119 based on the German priority application DE 102 58 576.8 filed on December 14, 2002 and confirm that the certified copy of the priority document filed on April 29, 2004 has been received.

Turning now to the Office Action, claims 1-16 are pending in this application. Claims 1 and 4 have been amended. No new matter has been introduced.

The Examiner objected to claims 4-11 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but the Examiner indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including the limitations of the base claim and intervening claims. Applicants have rewritten claim 4 in appropriate independent form. Accordingly, it is believed that claim 4 is now in condition for immediate allowance, and notice to this effect is requested. Also, it is submitted that claims 5-11 are also in form for immediate allowance by virtue of their various dependencies from claim 4, as well as for the additional features and structure recited therein. Notice to this effect is also respectfully requested.

Independent claim 1 and dependent claims 2, 3 and 12-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Hussmann et al. U.S. Patent No. 5,284,448. Applicants respectfully traverse the foregoing claim rejections. As now explained, a review and reading of the Hussmann patent makes clear that the patent does not disclose or yield Applicants' device as claimed. Applicants respectfully submit that differences in construction and arrangement exist between the device claimed in the present application and the device disclosed in Hussmann that warrant the immediate withdrawal of the claim rejections on anticipation grounds. Hussmann

does not disclose each element of the rejected claims, and, accordingly, the Examiner has not made out a *prima facie* case of anticipation.

The Hussmann patent describes a switching and control unit for a motor vehicle including a housing with a front plate having an aperture. A plug body having a front face and plug elements arranged thereon and insulated from each other projects through the aperture and is fixed to a collar bordering the aperture. A locking cam is provided for fixing the plug body to the front plate. The front plate and the plug body have opposing grooves and the locking cam is insertable into the opposing grooves to connect the front plate and the plug body. The front plate and the plug body can be inserted into the housing when the locking cam is fully inserted into the opposing grooves and, when the front plate and the plug body connected with the locking cam in the fully inserted position are inserted in the housing, the locking cam is fixed in position by the housing. The connection between the plug body and the front plate is sealed.

Applicants respectfully submit that the Hussmann patent does not describe or yield the pressure-tight structure of the device according to the present invention as claimed in independent claim 1 of the present application, both as filed and now amended; nor does it describe or yield an interchangeable connector shell arrangement as described and claimed in the present application. According to the present claimed invention, the insulator with the contact pin(s) is engaged in the housing and the interchangeable connector shell is fastened to the housing and/or the insulator (it is noted that the Office Action mistakenly states that the Hussmann housing 24 corresponds to the connector shell of the present invention). This is in stark contrast to the arrangement described in Hussmann whereby the plug body 10 is fixed to the front plate 13 and the plug body and front plate are inserted in the housing -- an arrangement that does not yield an interchangeable socket independent of the contact pin(s) as affirmatively claimed in the present invention.

In addition, Applicants have presented a clarifying amendment to claim 1 to appropriately recite the contact tab feature. Applicants note the Examiner's specific acknowledgement in the Office Action that the contact tab mounted in the shell in electrical contact with the contact pin(s) represents a patentable feature of the present invention.

Accordingly, claim 1 of the present application recites features and structure nowhere found in the Hussmann reference, and the Hussmann patent cannot anticipate or render claim 1 obvious.

The Federal Circuit has instructed that anticipation requires the disclosure in a single prior art reference of each element of the claim under consideration. *See W.L. Gore & Assocs. v. Garlock, Inc.*, 220 USPQ 303 (Fed. Cir. 1983), *cert. denied*, 469 U.S. 841 (1984); *see also Lindemann Maschinenfabrik GmbH v. American Hoist & Derrick Co.*, 221 USPQ 481, 485 (Fed. Cir. 1984) (requiring that the prior art reference disclose each element of the claimed invention arranged as in the claim). Considering that the device of the present invention as claimed in independent claim 1 differs in structure and arrangement from the device disclosed in Hussmann, as discussed above, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner has not made out a *prima facie* case of anticipation, and that claim 1 is patentable over Hussmann. Notice to this effect is earnestly solicited.

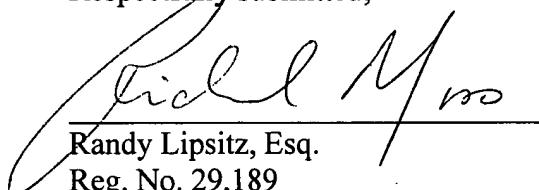
It is further submitted that dependent claims 3 and 12-16 are allowable by reason of their various dependencies from independent claim 1, as well as for the additional features and structure recited therein. The separate rejection of claim 2 as anticipated by Hussmann is specifically traversed. Notice to this effect is also earnestly requested.

The references cited by the Examiner in the Office Action but not applied are believed to be merely of interest, and no further discussion of the references is deemed necessary or appropriate at this time.

On the basis of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for immediate allowance, and notice to this effect is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorneys at the telephone number set forth below if it will advance the prosecution of this case.

No fee is believed due with this Response. Please charge any fee deficiency to Deposit Account No. 50-0540.

Respectfully submitted,



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